ISSN:2828-6235
Impact factor:13.77

International Journal of Literature and Language Studies(IJLLS)

METAPHORICAL MODELS IN TRANSLATION AND THE WAYS OF THEIR REPRESENTATION

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doi:https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23613756

Abstract: The article examines metaphorical models as a structural problem of translation and discusses the methods by which they can be represented in a target language. Metaphor is considered not only as a stylistic device but as a conceptual model that organizes the way people understand abstract domains such as time, emotion, and social relations. The study draws on recent work in cognitive translation studies and on comparative research of English and Uzbek metaphorical expressions. It identifies the main strategies of metaphor rendering, namely preservation of the image, substitution by a target-language equivalent, conversion to sense, and omission, and it shows how the choice among them depends on the cultural experience of the readers. The article argues that a translator should treat the conceptual core of a metaphor as the primary unit of translation.

Keywords: metaphorical model, conceptual metaphor, translation strategies, cognitive translation studies, cultural equivalence, English–Uzbek translation, figurative language.

INTRODUCTION

Metaphor has long been regarded as one of the most difficult problems in translation. A translator who meets a metaphor must decide whether the image should be kept, replaced, explained or dropped, and each decision affects the meaning and the emotional force of the text. In literary translation the problem is especially acute, because metaphors carry the author’s individual vision and the connotations of a particular culture. In non-literary texts, such as political, legal and economic discourse, metaphors shape the way readers evaluate events, so a faulty rendering may change the message itself.

For many years metaphor was treated mainly as an ornamental device, a deviation from ordinary language that could be replaced by a literal paraphrase. Modern cognitive research has changed this view. According to the conceptual approach, metaphor is a mapping between two conceptual domains, in which the structure of a concrete domain is used to understand an abstract one. Expressions such as “time is money” or “the argument is a building” are not isolated decorations but manifestations of general patterns of thought [2]. If metaphor is a pattern of thought, then the translator’s task is not only to find a corresponding word, but to recognize the model behind the word and to decide how this model can be expressed in the target language.

The present article addresses this task. Its aim is to describe metaphorical models in translation and to systematize the methods of their representation. The study pursues three objectives: to clarify the concept of a metaphorical model in the light of recent cognitive research; to analyze the strategies available to translators; and to show how cultural factors influence the choice of a strategy in English–Uzbek translation.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Metaphor as a conceptual model

The conceptual approach to metaphor has developed considerably since its first formulation. Kövecses [2] presents an extended version of the theory that responds to the criticisms directed at the original model. The extended view distinguishes between conceptual metaphors, which are stable mappings shared by a language community, and contextual metaphors, which arise in a particular discourse and may draw on the conceptual metaphors without being identical to them.

This distinction is important for translation, because a translator must determine whether the metaphor in the source text reflects a general conceptual pattern or an individual, context-bound image.

The extended theory also emphasizes that metaphors are grounded in human experience. Spatial orientation, bodily sensations, and interaction with physical objects provide the source domains from which abstract concepts such as emotion, time, or power are understood. When the source and the target language draw on similar experiences, the conceptual model is likely to be shared. When they do not, the same abstract concept may be expressed through different source domains, and this difference creates the main difficulty for the translator.

Metaphor in translation studies

Hong and Rossi [1] provide a critical overview of the cognitive turn in metaphor translation studies. They show that research since the emergence of conceptual metaphor theory has used a wide range of questions and methods, from corpus-based analysis to experimental studies of reader comprehension. The authors pay particular attention to culturally distant language pairs, where the risk of misunderstanding is higher because the source domains of metaphors differ substantially. Their review confirms that translation research has moved from prescriptive lists of procedures toward descriptive models that explain why a particular solution is chosen in a given context.

This shift has an important implication. A prescriptive approach assumes that a translator can select the correct procedure once the type of metaphor is identified. A cognitive approach accepts that the decision depends on the reader's access to the conceptual domain, the purpose of the text, and the conventions of the target genre. The method adopted in the present study follows the second approach, because it allows the analysis to take into account both the conceptual content of metaphors and the cultural context in which they are received.

Metaphor across languages and cultures

Research on metaphor in translation between English and Uzbek remains relatively recent. Mamarizayeva [3] analyzes metaphors in an artistic text and identifies three main strategies used to render them from Uzbek into English. The study argues that metaphor comprehension depends strongly on cultural experience, which makes the translation of culturally marked images particularly difficult. This finding is consistent with the conceptual approach: when the experience behind a source domain is not shared by the target readers, a literal rendering may preserve the words but not the model.

A comparative perspective is also provided by Šeškauskienė [4], who studies how academic texts in English and Lithuanian metaphorically describe translation itself. The analysis shows that English tends to present translation as a dynamic human activity, whereas Lithuanian more often presents it as a static object or material. Although the article focuses on metaphors of translation rather than on the translation of metaphors, it demonstrates that the same activity may be conceptualized through different models in different languages. For a translator, this means that the conceptual framework of the source text must be identified before its images are transferred.

Methodology

The study uses a qualitative descriptive method combined with comparative analysis. First, the theoretical framework is defined on the basis of recent cognitive research [1; 2]. Second, metaphorical expressions drawn from English texts are grouped according to the conceptual domains they activate, such as emotion, time, conflict, movement and social structure. Third, the translation strategies are identified by comparing each source expression with its Uzbek rendering and with the target-language conventions. The comparison considers whether the conceptual model is preserved, how the image is represented, and what happens to the emotional and evaluative force of the expression.

The study is limited by its scope. The examples are selected to illustrate the typology of strategies rather than to provide statistically representative frequencies. The conclusions are

therefore descriptive and should be tested on larger corpora. Nevertheless, the method makes it possible to explain the translator's choices in terms of conceptual structure and cultural experience, which is the central aim of the article.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of metaphorical models relevant to translation

For the purposes of translation, metaphorical models can be grouped into three broad types. Orientational models organize concepts through spatial relations, as in the expression "to feel up" or "to be down in spirits". Ontological models treat abstract phenomena as objects or substances, as in "the mind is a machine" or "inflation is a monster". Structural models use one complex domain to structure another, as in "time is money", where time is conceptualized as a valuable resource that can be spent, saved or wasted.

The three types differ in their translation difficulty. Orientational models are often universal, because spatial experience is shared by most human cultures, so they usually transfer without loss. Ontological models are more variable, since the choice of an object or substance as a metaphor depends on the material culture of the community. Structural models are the most culturally sensitive, because they are built on complex analogies that may not be familiar to the target readers. The translator should therefore pay particular attention to structural models when the source language relies on a culturally specific domain.

Strategies for representing metaphors

The analysis identifies four strategies that translators use when rendering metaphors. The first is preservation of the image. In this case the source domain and the mapping are transferred unchanged, as in English "a heart of stone" rendered in Uzbek by a similar image of a stone-like heart. This strategy is effective when the source image is understood in the target culture, and it preserves the expressive power of the original. Its limitation is that an image which is clear to the source readers may sound unnatural or ambiguous to the target readers.

The second strategy is substitution by a target-language equivalent. The translator replaces the source image with an existing expression that conveys the same conceptual meaning in the target language. The English idiom "time is money" can be rendered by the Uzbek proverb "vaqt — oltin", which expresses the same valuation of time through a different but familiar image. Substitution is often the most natural solution for idioms and conventional metaphors, but it requires the translator to know the target language idiom system well enough to avoid a loss of connotation.

The third strategy is conversion to sense, in which the metaphor is paraphrased and its literal meaning is stated. This approach is used when neither preservation nor substitution produces an acceptable result. It guarantees that the message is understood, but it removes the figurative dimension. Conversion is therefore appropriate in technical or informational texts, where clarity has priority over expressive effect, and less appropriate in literary texts, where the image itself is part of the meaning.

The fourth strategy is omission, in which the metaphor is removed without compensation. Omission is rarely acceptable, because it changes the content of the text. It may be justified only when the metaphor is redundant, when it repeats information already present in the context, or when its rendering would make the target text obscure. Even in these cases, the translator should consider compensation, such as adding a stylistic marker elsewhere in the text.

Cultural factors and the choice of strategy

Cultural experience is a decisive factor in the choice among these strategies. Consider an English expression describing a skilled gardener as having "a green thumb". The image relies on the cultural association between a green thumb and successful planting, which may be less immediate for readers who do not share the same gardening practices. In such a case, preservation may produce a literal and puzzling image, while conversion to sense can state the idea of natural

skill directly. The translator's choice depends on whether the text aims to reproduce the source culture or to communicate the meaning to the target audience.

The same reasoning applies to metaphors that express social relations and moral evaluation. Expressions linked to family, hospitality, or respect may carry strong positive or negative connotations in Uzbek culture, and an English metaphor from a different tradition may be read differently by Uzbek readers. Mamarizayeva [3] shows that such differences are one of the main sources of loss in translation. In practice, a translator can reduce the loss by identifying the conceptual core of the metaphor, checking whether it is shared, and selecting a strategy that transfers the evaluation as well as the image.

A procedure for the translator

On the basis of the analysis, a practical procedure can be proposed. The translator first determines the type of metaphorical model in the source text: orientational, ontological or structural. Next, the translator checks whether the conceptual domain is shared by the target culture. If it is shared and the image is conventional in the target language, the translator may preserve the image or substitute an equivalent. If the domain is shared but the image is not conventional, preservation may be combined with a short explanation. If the domain is not shared, conversion to sense is usually the most reliable solution. Omission is considered only as a last resort.

This procedure does not replace the translator's judgment, but it structures that judgment and makes it explainable. It is consistent with the view that translation is a decision-making process governed by conceptual and cultural constraints rather than by a fixed list of rules. The procedure can also be used in translator training, since it helps students to justify their choices in terms of the conceptual structure of the source text.

Translating metaphors about translation

The study also considers a reflexive case. Šeškauskienė [4] demonstrates that the way a language conceptualizes translation influences how translators describe their own work. Where translation is framed as a human activity, the translator appears as an agent who acts on the text. Where it is framed as an object, the translator appears as a passive carrier of meaning. For a translator who works between English and Uzbek, awareness of these framings is valuable, because it reveals hidden assumptions about the role of the translator in each culture and may affect the strategies adopted in practice.

Illustrative analysis of rendering decisions

The following examples illustrate how the proposed procedure works in practice. In each case the source metaphor is classified, the conceptual domain is identified, and the most suitable strategy is indicated. The examples are constructed for analytical purposes and are intended to show the reasoning rather than to report corpus frequencies.

Example 1. The English sentence "She carried the burden of the family alone" activates a structural model in which responsibility is conceptualized as a physical load. The domain of physical burden is widely shared, so the image can usually be preserved. An Uzbek rendering that keeps the image of a load, such as "oilaning yukini yolg'iz ko'tardi", conveys the same conceptual model and the same sense of hardship. The strategy is preservation, and the risk of loss is low.

Example 2. The expression "to break the news" belongs to a conventional structural model in which information is treated as a fragile object. When the translator needs a natural Uzbek phrase, substitution by an established expression that announces bad news gently is often preferable to a literal image of breaking. The choice preserves the sense of a sensitive communication, which is the essential function of the metaphor in the context.

Example 3. In a political text, the phrase "the economy is overheating" is an ontological metaphor in which the economy is conceptualized as a machine or a body that can suffer from excessive temperature. The metaphor is conventional in economic discourse, and most target

readers will understand it in the same way. Preservation or a conventional Uzbek economic term may be used, depending on the genre. Conversion to sense, such as “the economy grows too fast”, would weaken the evaluative force that the source text expresses through the image.

Example 4. A literary image that depends on a local custom or a regional practice is the most difficult case. When the custom has no counterpart in the target culture, neither preservation nor substitution produces a clear result. Conversion to sense with a brief explanatory note is then the most responsible solution, because it guarantees that the reader understands the intended meaning, while the translator’s note preserves the link with the source culture.

Implications for translator training

The analysis has several implications for the teaching of translation. First, students should learn to identify metaphorical models before they attempt to render individual words. A simple exercise in which students classify metaphors as orientational, ontological or structural helps them to see the conceptual structure of a text and to avoid the habit of translating images word by word.

Second, training should include comparative tasks in which students evaluate several renderings of the same metaphor and justify their preferences. Such tasks develop metalinguistic awareness and make the translator’s decisions explicit. The procedure described above can serve as a framework for these discussions, because it requires students to state the conceptual model, the cultural accessibility of the image, and the chosen strategy.

Third, the translator should be trained to recognize the emotional and evaluative function of metaphors. In many texts the image is less important than the attitude it expresses. A translator who focuses only on the image may produce a correct but emotionally flat text. Awareness of this function allows students to select strategies that preserve the attitude of the author even when the image itself must change.

CONCLUSION

The article has shown that metaphor in translation should be understood as a conceptual model rather than as an isolated image. Recent cognitive research provides a framework in which the translator can identify the type of model, assess its cultural accessibility, and choose an appropriate strategy [1; 2]. Among the strategies, preservation, substitution, conversion and omission each have specific conditions of use, and their effectiveness depends on how well the conceptual core of the metaphor is transferred.

The analysis of English–Uzbek translation confirms that cultural experience is one of the main factors that determine the success of a rendering [3]. Comparative studies of metaphors of translation further show that conceptual frameworks differ across languages [4]. These findings support the proposed procedure, which begins with the identification of the conceptual model and ends with a justified choice of strategy.

Further research should test the proposed typology on larger corpora of literary and non-literary texts and examine how readers in the target culture interpret different renderings. Such studies would provide empirical evidence for the relative effectiveness of each strategy and would help to refine the procedure for translator training.

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